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# JOHN AMERIC HOME

HOLIDAY EDITION



A WORLD OF TRADITIONS

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# DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

THE BEST OF THE BEST

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MARY GORDON

Mary Gordon, Vice President at InSite Builders & Remodeling, [www.insiteremodeling.com](http://www.insiteremodeling.com), loves to entertain, especially at Thanksgiving. Childhood traditions, her time at the White House, and family gatherings continue to inspire her zest for entertaining.

Gordon began her career working at The White House after graduating from George Washington University. From 1984 to January 1989, she served as the Assistant to First Lady Nancy Reagan's Press Secretary. Following this, she was at home raising a family and helping on a part-time basis with administrative tasks at InSite. Through the years her duties have expanded, and, as Vice President, she oversees the Administrative and Marketing divisions and works closely with the President Stephen Gordon and General Manager Chris Katkish to develop and maintain the mission, vision, and culture of the company.

At home, her family and friends are happy recipients of her hosting and culinary skills. Her favorite holiday is Thanksgiving with its tried-and-true traditions, family recipes, old and new

friends, and the opportunity to spend treasured time together. Gordon provides some tips for making Thanksgiving a day to remember.

**Nothing says Thanksgiving more than the dining room table with its festive feast. Do you use special china, silverware, and linens for this and other special occasions? If so, tell us about the items, their history, and why they're special to you.**

**Gordon:** My earliest memories of Thanksgiving are at my grandparents' house. My grandmother always set her dining room table with her beautiful jewel-toned crystal goblets from the Czech Republic. I have those goblets now, and every Thanksgiving I set my dining room table with them.

When I began hosting Thanksgiving, I used her colored goblets with a formal, starched white linen tablecloth and napkins, just as my grandmother did. Through the years, I've replaced the white with different colored and textured tablecloths to create a more modern aesthetic. It takes a little

practice and experimentation to get it right, but the result is well worth the effort, and I'm certain my grandmother would approve.

The blending of treasured family traditions with new ideas and customs is, for me, the very heart of Thanksgiving. An elegantly set Thanksgiving table makes family and friends feel so special and valued. It also contributes to the sense of gratitude, connection, and celebration that Thanksgiving represents.

**How do you decorate the center of the table? Can you offer simple and elaborate centerpiece options?**

**Gordon:** Often, we have 20-plus people for Thanksgiving, so I have multiple tables in multiple rooms, each with different centerpieces. I always have a floral centerpiece in the dining room, but I try to be a little more creative for the centerpieces on the other tables.

I love candlelight, and one of the simplest and most effective centerpieces is to place ivory pillar candles in glass hurricane holders on a burlap tablecloth or table runner, spread a few white mini pumpkins on the table, lower the lights, and you have a perfect setting for a Thanksgiving gathering.

For other simple centerpieces, fill a straw basket with white and orange mini pumpkins and Bosc pears, or fill a basket with a vibrant green plant and surround it with mini pumpkins and votive candles. Another option is to build a bouquet of lilies and tulips, which come in a wide array of fall colors, such as soft oranges, corals, and yellows. Keep all the blooms at the same height and place them in a vase.

Trader Joe's has pre-made floral arrangements in pumpkins that make a charming centerpiece, or if placed on a hall table, is a festive way to greet guests as they enter your home.

**What about the front door and foyer? What are a few tips to welcome family and guests into your home for the Thanksgiving holiday?**

**Gordon:** There is something quietly elegant about decorating a front door and entryway with natural, seasonal items, such as pumpkins, gourds, pinecones, and mums. For me, there's no better way to welcome guests on Thanksgiving than to walk through an autumn display at the front door into a home filled with candlelight, an attractively set table, a warm fire, and football on the TV.

**Do you introduce new foods or traditions each year? If so, what do you have planned for this Thanksgiving?**

**Gordon:** I never accept the generous offers from friends to bring something when we entertain, except at Thanksgiving. When guests inquire how they can help with dinner, I ask



them what they would like to bring, and this is how we introduce wonderful food into our traditional fare every year.

Last Thanksgiving, a couple with a Greek heritage brought Spanakopita, which is Greek spinach pie, as an appetizer and it was devoured in minutes. Another year, my niece replaced mashed potatoes with gingery miso smashed potatoes with sesame seeds. Delicious!

Combining our traditional favorites with new and unique foods contributes to the rich tapestry of our Thanksgiving celebrations.

**What is a favorite family tradition?**

**Gordon:** Our favorite family tradition at Thanksgiving is simply to welcome all to our home. Everyone knows that they can invite friends, relatives, co-workers, in-laws, and out-laws to our house. This "welcome" policy has been very rewarding and resulted in new friendships, lots of laughter, camaraderie, animated conversations, and, ultimately, so many happy memories.

I credit my grandparents and those beautiful jewel-toned crystal goblets for setting a standard for Thanksgiving that we follow to this day. It seems Thanksgiving is everyone's favorite holiday; I know for certain it's mine.

**What traditional foods do you serve with the turkey?**

**Gordon:** There are two traditional favorites at our house that are requested year after year to accompany our Thanksgiving turkey dinner. One is Aunt Eunice's Sweet Potato Casserole and the other is Pumpkin Chiffon Pie with homemade whipped cream.

